

Mexican  
Government,  
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Them

YUAYMAS, SONORA, March 26.—Southern Sonora is the land of the Yaqui Indians, the "Apaches of Mexico," as they have been termed by those who have had opportunity for comparing the Yaquis and their bravery, ruthlessness in war and relentless hostility with the kindred characteristics of the Apaches which formerly made them the scourge of the far west in the United States. Like the Apaches, the Yaquis have been forced to give way before the march of progress. They fought stubbornly and valiantly to resist the encroachments of civilization and to hold themselves exempt from the white man's laws. But the pressure became too strong for them. Now the Yaquis are a conquered people.

Only a few weeks ago the Mexican authorities and the principal chiefs of the Yaquis celebrated the first anniversary of the treaty of La Pitahaya. By the terms of the treaty, the Yaquis laid down their arms, ceased to struggle and agreed to live in future on terms of amity with the government.

The Yaqui a Farmer. Farms have been given them, and it is said federal aid has generously been extended to provide them with agricultural implements, seeds, livestock and other necessities. By inheritance and inclination the Yaqui is a tiller of the soil. Cautiously enough, he is a fighter, too. For hundreds of years the tribesfolk cultivated the land in the fertile valleys of the Yaqui and the Mayo river. From the days of the Spanish conquistadores until the treaty of La Pitahaya the Yaquis had never recognized the authority of the government. They refused to acknowledge the sovereignty either of the Spanish or of the Mexicans. They militantly asserted their rights to the land that had been held by their ancestors for generations. "Let us alone," was the only condition that they could be induced to accept as a basis of relations with the Spanish and the Mexicans.

Had Sonora been a barren and unproductive region it would have been feasible to leave the Yaquis in undisputed possession of the country they claimed as theirs. But Sonora is rich in minerals, gold, silver and copper, while its soil, for the most part, is highly productive. It was inevitable that, with the development of the rest of Mexico and the contiguous portions of the United States, the farmer, the miner and the stockman, should invade the Yaqui territory.

The Yaqui would share his country with no one. He was intolerant of companionship or amicable relations with the outlander. Progress and the operation of the inexorable law of civilization which, to be effective, must replace the old order with the new, made no convincing appeal to him. He fought as long as he could, and yielded only when the pressure became too strong.

An Indian Contrast. This marked difference appears by contrasting the case of the Yaquis with that of the Indians of the United States. No war of extermination was waged against the Yaquis by Mexico. Although conquered, the Yaquis are still a numerically strong and virile people. There are probably 25,000 of them still in Sonora. One sees them everywhere, threading the streets of the cities and towns, on their way to and from market, or busy in their fields, no matter where one travels. Severe and for the most part unmerciful condemnation has been unsparingly uttered at the expense of the Mexican government for the cruelties and oppressions which it is alleged to have visited upon the Yaquis. Critics who have taken the Yaqui question as a text either have dealt in half truths or deliberately misrepresented the facts. In dealing with the Yaqui problem the government has behaved more humanely and generously with them than it must be confessed, did the United States with the remnants of the aboriginal tribes.

If any blame is to be laid at the door of the Mexican government in connection with the Yaqui it proceeds from the lack of firmness and energy with which it set out at first to bring the Indians into subjection. Had the government grappled with the situation in this state in the beginning as determinedly as it did later on, humanity would have been served, through the sparing of the lives of thousands of Indians and Mexican soldiers who fell in the various wars with the Yaquis, and the blood of non-combatants, peaceable farmers,

miners, travelers, women and children. Sonora would have fared much further along lines of commercial, agricultural and mining development, too, had it not been for the retarding influence of the Yaqui troubles. But the fact is that it is only within recent years that the federal government has been in a position to carry out a definite, energetic and persistent policy toward the Yaquis. Money was lacking and there were other tasks that took precedence.

The Bloodiest Epoch. It is interesting to note, in examining the history of the Yaqui wars, that the bloodiest epoch of the conflict was probably the last. For the most part the Yaquis had been confined indefinitely to the Yaqui territory, and quite apart from any exciting cause furnished by the Mexican government. The final period of the war lasted from 1885 until 1908. During three years' hostilities were interrupted only by occasional brief intervals of peace.

Cajeme was the shrewdest and most capable war chief that the Yaquis ever had. Under him they attained the most nearly to their ideal, which was that of absolute independence and submission only to their own leaders. Cajeme organized the Yaquis and the Mayos on a war footing. His warriors were sufficiently numerous and well drilled to defy the best forces that the Mexican government was able to send against them prior to 1885. So the Indians were left pretty much to themselves. Cajeme would brook no divided authority. Opposition to his rule arose among a faction of the Indians, headed by a chief from Loreto Molina tribe, Cajeme banished the rebels from the Yaqui territory and confiscated their property.

Chief's Family Murdered. The Molinas resided in this city. An armed neutrality then existed between the Yaquis and the government, which probably would have continued indefinitely had the Molinas not set themselves to punish Cajeme for their banishment and the confiscation of their lands. On a night in January, 1885, 30 Molinas attacked Cajeme's home. Cajeme was killed, and his family murdered. His house was burned.

Cajeme demanded of the Mexican official in command of the troops in Guaymas, whether the Molinas would set, then, the surrender of the latter. By way of enforcing his demands the Yaqui chief seized a number of small steam and sailing craft belonging to Mexican residents of Guaymas and threatened to destroy them unless the Molinas were surrendered within three days. "I will also declare war against the Mexicans," was the Yaqui ultimatum. The Mexicans, who were not prepared to accede to the demands of Cajeme, who immediately destroyed the boats and took the field at the head of 15,000 warriors.

Government Accepts Defiance. There was nothing for the government to do save to accept the defiance thus forced upon it by the Yaquis. The most lamentable feature of the disturbances with the Yaquis was furnished by the outrages committed by the Indians in their forays upon settlements and haciendas. Neither women nor children were spared. When it took the warpath the Yaqui did not spare the life of the barbaric panoply of feathers and breach cloth, like the Apache, for the Yaquis is not a "blanket Indian." He forebore to smother his face and body with paint. He had and wore the same conventional garments of civilization, the trousers, shirt and hat, but this did not mitigate his ferocity. He fought according to his lights, and on the principle of "kill or be killed." He was a man of a town without an escort of troops. Places which had been industrial, mining or agricultural centers were depopulated. Mining enterprises, especially those in which American investors were interested, were abandoned because of the impossibility of preserving communication with the cities and towns from which the miners drew their supplies. Life in the mountains was no longer safe. Scores of families in Sonora who suffered the loss of members at the hands of the Yaquis. It is undeniable that the Indians put prisoners to torture. Scalping was practiced.

Did Not Respect Americans. No foundation exists for the assertion offered by champions of the Yaquis that invariably they respected the lives and property of Americans. Many Americans were killed by them. The money loss resulting from the Yaqui uprising fell as heavily upon Americans as upon Mexicans. Sonora's proximity to the Mexican frontier had led Americans to invest millions in mining ventures and in agricultural enterprises. Americans who had supported at the hands of the Yaquis repeatedly called upon the United States government to

force the Mexican government to compensate them for the depredations on the part of Washington which finally aroused the Mexican government to the urgent necessity of mastering the Yaquis.

Diplomacy Exhausted. It is undoubtedly true that the Mexican government exhausted every method of diplomacy, argument and generosity to placate the Yaquis. Now and then the Indians, when hard pressed, would consent to accept the allotments of lands and assistance from the national treasury. And assume a friendly attitude which often lasted no more than a few months. When troops were withdrawn, fresh outbreaks followed. Whenever the Indians could be induced to give battle to the troops, the soldiers won.

But the troops lost heavily when the Yaquis confined themselves to their favorite and most successful tactics, splitting the troops by treacherous ambushes, and descending in sudden and impetuous whirlwinds upon camps and bivouacs. It was the boast of the Yaquis that before the Yaqui soldiers were sent to Sonora for every Yaqui. Gen. Torres, in command of the troops in this state, once sent a thousand soldiers' caps to the city of Mexico and declared that the Yaquis were so numerous that they filled with fighters.

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THE YAQUI INDIANS  
By Robert H. Murray  
Correspondent Denies Stories of Cruelty, But Admits That Many Executions Have Taken Place and That Hardships Accompanied the Deportation of the Indians—History of the Wars.

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Indians Executed. Death, by the bullet of the halber, was meted out to hundreds of the Indians by various Mexican commanders, who were provoked to such drastic methods by much the same sort of outrages as those which enraged the Yaquis. The Yaquis, who were ostensibly peaceful, would devote their earnings as laborers, or contribute from the proceeds of their farms, to the support of the Yaqui cause. Cajeme's forces were constantly recruited by fresh detachments of men who replaced those of his followers who were killed, wounded, or spent by privation and hardships. The Yaquis crossed the border and worked in the United States, sending their wages to replenish Cajeme's war chest.

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